



Elijah Appears and Disappears as the Wind

Written by
A Mighty Arrow



Introduction

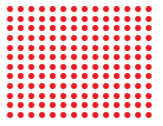
Elijah is widely accepted as the first great prophet of the northern kingdom of Israel. It is thought that Elijah was born prior to 900BC and spent his childhood in the village of Tishbe. Tishbe was such a remote village so far from the center of the Israelite main population and of no apparent distinction that it is mentioned nowhere else in the Holy Bible. The arid, dry, un-relentless hot region on the edge of the great Arabian Desert east of the Jordan seems to befit the Prophet Elijah's personality. The remote barren region of Tishbe in Gilead was little influenced by the more civilized, densely populated Israel's Canaanite pagan ways and idol worship but rather upheld all the ancient Israelite traditions and beliefs. Elijah whose name meant "my God is Yahweh" and the Tishbite population as a whole were totally devoted to God. This proves the age old conception that if you surround yourself with Godly people you ensure Godly characteristics and ways within your own life.

Elijah was a courageous, outspoken, and confrontational prophet whose miraculous works over about fifteen years are described in the Old Testament Holy Books of I and II Kings. At first, the stories of Elijah's dramatic deeds and miracles were handed down through tradition from generation to generation for some 300 years, and then were chronicled in a single book completed around 550. Along with tradition, written resources of Elijah's life's work as was much of Israel's life from the time of Samuel

the prophet to Elijah was documented by a group called "sons of prophets." The prophetic guild which lived apart in their own communities regarded Elijah as their father and compiled many of his heroic deeds and handed them down along with tradition from centuries to centuries helping to predominantly ensure the accuracy of both the exploits of Elijah in eradicating idol worship and Elisha his disciple. Unusual in the recording of the trials and tribulations of Elijah is that Elijah's wondrous works as a mysterious prophet of action are primarily recorded rather than solely his teachings, his thoughts, and his meditations.

Elijah was a powerful prophet of action, who proclaimed his mission forthright,

> **"I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected Your covenant, broken down Your altars, and put Your prophets to death by sword." (I Kings 19:14)**



First Commission:
Strong Warning against Idol Worship

Elijah was speculated to be in his mid thirties when the worship of idols came to a crisis point in the Israelite population. King Ahab and his queen Jezebel promoted the worship of Baal and the goddess Asherah. Though King Ahab's father was a worshipper of Yahweh he did not abolish the worship of other gods, perhaps by his lack of discouragement, his luke-warmness, Baal took a stronghold under his reign. His son, Ahab, succeeded the throne at his death and married to a Phoenician who had grown up worshipping Baal and Asherah the advocacy of idol worship was promoted and flourished stronger than ever before forcing Elijah into constant conflict with the rulers of the land. Conflict with the ruling class meant certain death for those in opposition.

Stronger still than the king and queen's devotion to their idols was Elijah's belief in God. Suddenly without introduction or forewarning, Elijah appeared at the court of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel and uttered a prophecy of gloom and doom for their idolatrous kingdom. Elijah, through God's jealous Hands, sentenced the idol worshipping civilization to years of drought, food shortage, and financial demise. This meant certain ruin for a culture based totally on its agriculture for means of trade and survival. So he prayed that it would not rain, and it did not rain for three years and six months. (James 5:17). With conviction of faith Elijah said,

> "...there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word." (I Kings 17:1).

This is how the famine came about which lasted for several years. Just as quickly as the Prophet Elijah appeared to curse them and warn them to turn from idol worship, he disappears.

King Ahab made the Prophet Elijah the object of a kingdom wide manhunt and vengeful killing should Elijah be found. This act should be questioned by a king insistent upon idol worship, but apparently he believed the prophet's message just enough to hold him responsible for the ensuing fam-

ine and its consequences for the kingdom's economy. The king did not find the prophet that had disappeared as the wind and became as elusive as its breeze.



God sent Elijah to a safe place where he could hide to pursue his prophetic works at a later time. Elijah hid by a tributary of water called Cherith. Biblical historians to this day are not sure of its exact location other than the fact it is east of the Jordan so secluded was its topographic location. The direction "east" was as significant in the Old Testament as it would be in the New Testament. Though the prophet was alone and without human survival means, we know that God provided for his needs and we also can surmise that he was comfortable with the nature that not only was a part of him from birth but became who he would be paralleled with in life.

"Ravens brought Elijah bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening." (I Kings 17:6)

The brook where Elijah drank water in hiding also denoted the increasingly severe drought that was overtaking the land as its water became less and less. When the stream dried up Elijah traveled north to Zarephath in Sidon. Ironically this was Queen Jezebel's hometown, a region firmly rooted in the worship of Baal. It was here that the story of the destitute Canaanite widow takes place.

Elijah encounters an obviously poor widow gathering sticks at the town gate and asks her for bread and water. She replies that she and her son are impoverished and that drought has resigned them to die. She has

only enough oil and meal to bake a few final cakes for themselves and when eaten she feels sure they will starve and die. Perhaps the prophet sensing that her heart is full of grief as she no longer has a husband to depend upon and a son still entrusted in her care that soon she will not be capable of feeding, she will be mindful that Baal has not assisted her in her plight and maybe the God of Israel will hear her plea. Elijah's conviction and his challenge to trust the God of Israel to provide her with continuing nourishment encouraged the woman to bring food to Elijah and for the length of the famine the...

"Jar of meal was not spent, neither did the cruse of oil fail." (I Kings 17: 16)

The widow's beloved only son a short time later would become ill and die. In her grief stricken state, the widow would question the fairness of Elijah's teachings and God. Elijah responds to her grief compassionately and takes her son upstairs in the widow's house and prayed to God for the child to regain life. He stretched his body over the dead son who had taken his final breath only minutes before three times, and God warmed the lifeless body and breathed life back into the body.

> "And the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived." (I Kings 17:21-22)



Second Commission: **Demonstration of God's Power Increased**

Perhaps in a territory where Baal was paramount, God gave a generous poor widow the ability to no longer doubt when Elijah must leave to attend to God's work on a kingdom level. During the third year of the drought ravaging Ahab's kingdom God sends Elijah to challenge Ahab's continued worship of Baal. Elijah suffers immediate degradation from King Ahab by being called the "Troubler of Israel." Elijah undeterred provocatively responds to this with a challenge. He requests the four hundred prophets of Asherah and the four hundred fifty prophets of Baal meet him at Mount Carmel for a determination of who worshipped the true God. Multitudes curiously gathered as eight hundred fifty prophets congregated to be challenged by a single prophet of God.

Elijah stood waiting alone upon Mount Carmel. Why was Mount Carmel chosen? Mount Carmel had once been a mountain promontory site for the altar to Baal from ancient times of idol worship. Under Israelite rule an altar to God was erected. It should be said that at the time of the provocation, the altar to God was crumbling and almost in ruins, symbolic perhaps of the religious condition of the unfaithful Israelite nation.

Demanding of the king, Elijah spoke forthright and with few words that a choice had to be made.

> "How long will you go limping with two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." (I Kings 18:21)

As quietness took over the mood of the multitudes Elijah was not patient with the king, and said that two altars could be built one for Baal and one for God. Both sides should pray and the god, who answers by fire, is God.

The Baal prophets danced and perform the accustomed rituals until the heat of the day was reached. Elijah asked if Baal was asleep, was meditating, on a journey or

perhaps they needed to cry out louder. It becomes readily apparent that Elijah is not fearful by personality as he is surrounded by many who desire him dead. The Baal prophets in desperation and enduring the taunting of Elijah in front of the king and the multitudes begin slashing themselves until covered in blood which still did not bring forth the desired fire on the altar.

Elijah following the blood letting began to quickly repair the crumbling altar of Yahweh and using twelve stones to represent the twelve tribes of Israel, dug a deep trench around the altar which he then called for four pots of water to be filled and poured over the sacrificial bull and wood laid out. This pouring of water over the sacrifice and wood was repeated two more times until the trench was filled and the altar saturated with the water.

At the appointed time Elijah approached the altar alone and prayed aloud saying

> “God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel...answer me, that this people may know that thou, O Lord are God, and that thou hast turned their hearts back.” (I Kings 18: 36-37)

Even as Elijah spoke these words, flames engulfed everything—the water saturated sacrifice, the wood, the stones of the field, and astonishingly the water itself in the trenches. Elijah demanded the people to take hold of the prophets of Baal and Elijah condemn them to death. Executed by sword were the prophets of idols and no remorse was the strong words of Elijah the prophet.

“Whoever sacrifices to any god, save to the Lord only, shall be utterly destroyed.” (Exodus 22:20)

One would think now all of Israel and its Baal worshippers would immediately and forever return to the Lord. It seems with the Israelite population this was not to be the case for any length of time. Upon learning of Elijah’s destruction of all Baal’s prophets (those under her authority and many having been personally selected as well) Queen

Jezebel swore to take Elijah’s life and have him immediately executed before all. She detested Elijah and ordered his death. Historians have long thought that Queen Jezebel was more powerful and cruel than was her husband.

Now the presumed tired and exhausted prophet was again required to flee for his life once more. Elijah’s life would continue to be filled with confrontations with Ahab, Jezebel, and their successor Ahaziah. Threats of death were the fabric of his life and perhaps because he did not flee from his belief and worship of God, God did not allow Elijah to taste the death he had been threatened with most of his adult life.

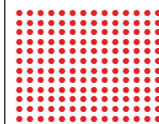


Wall painting discovered in El-Suryan Monastery of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

Perhaps because of a society that had become due to advancing age, perhaps even due to the inability to fathom others' disbelief even when proven to them the right and true God, under the auspice of a sudden thunderstorm Elijah flees to the Sinai Desert. Here alone in the desert Elijah realizes his hope of a restored nation to God has been negated by a vile, heathen Queen and her pagan worship.

Though his love for God is unwavering he feels defeated and his humanity begins to show forth.

Despair overtakes this prophet of Gilead, and he succumbs to the lonely broom tree



tired and dispirited. His humanity perhaps experienced more so through his self-pity overcomes a prophet that has been greater than life through his thunderous and decided actions. Even the Angel of the Lord sent to touch and provide food for Elijah does not lift him from his depression at first. Elijah chooses his self-pity until once again the Angel of the Lord appears to feed him and instruct him to travel southward. Perhaps being fed by the Angel of the Lord, perhaps being fed nourishment, perhaps the exercise of travel or all these things enabled the despairing prophet to make a forty day journey to the already prophetic infamously trod Mount Sinai.

While in his cave alone on the mountain a mighty wind whipped its gales through the mountain rock. Then an earthquake shook the mountain, followed by a raging fire. As the fire died down a "quiet unmistakable voice" was heard, Elijah recognized the voice of the true God. Elijah wrapped his mantle around his face to shield his eyes and went out of his cave to Baal could be represented in signs such as wind, earth movement and fire but never in a small scale of anything such as a quiet voice. Maybe, this would demonstrate to Elijah that with God competition meet the Lord with a new found gladness in his heart. God loved Elijah and it is evident He will not abandon this prophet whom has defended his God. It is thought that Baal could be represented in signs such as wind, earth movement and fire but never in a small scale of anything such as a quiet voice. Maybe, this would demonstrate to Elijah that with God, He was not only a ruler of natural forces but surpassed all earthly powers in a quiet manner unique to only Him.

Elijah still somewhat shrouded in his own self-pity would say

"The people of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thy altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I even I only am left; and they seek my life to take it away." (I Kings 19:13-14).

Elijah, sadly, as many today had begun to think God needed his victories rather than God does not need us to conquer sin but to be instruments of His will. Elijah though

deeply steeped in tradition and his love of God was fallible too.

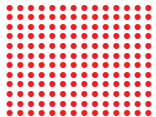
Third Commission: **Destruction of a Dynasty**

Elijah would again undertake a journey up the Jordan valley where he would meet Elisha plowing in a field in a town called Abel-meholah. Elijah cast his mantle upon him and Elisha followed Elijah as his disciple.

During Elijah's travels King Ahab was accruing more and more land through victorious battles, trading agreements, and confiscation of property through deceit. One such taking of land was Naboth's land. Ahab had Naboth whom he had executed for alleged treason and blasphemy so he could acquire the land that belonged to him. As King Ahab entered his newly acquired land, Elijah was suddenly and unexpectedly there to greet him. It was here that King Ahab would hear the fated prophesy of the death of his dynasty and the death of his queen, Jezebel. Scared and turning to sackcloth and fasting could only postpone the fateful death of the king. God would have no mercy for one whom turned His people to idol worship.

In a land of unending kings and faithless people Elijah was called upon to once again predict the death of another king, Ahab's son Ahaziah. Ahaziah when injured in a fall called upon "Ball-zebub, the god of Ekron." (II Kings 1:2). As amazing and ill understood as it may seem Elijah also met this king with the message that he would die. It seems Elijah was constantly prophesying death with no hopes of forgiveness or eternal life. When King Ahaziah recognized from whom the message came, he sent fifty soldiers to arrest the prophet. It seems strange that King Ahaziah did not lead the fifty soldiers himself if he was so secure in the worship of Ball-zebub but rather displayed the opposite, his weakness.

Elijah called down from Heaven a scorching fire which engulfed them all and a second fifty were sent to replace the burned charred bodies of the first fifty. Following this Elijah went forth to King Ahaziah and pronounced his eternal damnation. The king died child-



> “And Elijah answered and said to the captain of the fifty: ‘If I am a man of God let fire come down from Heaven and consume you and the fifty. And there came down fire from Heaven and consumed him and his fifty.’” (II Kings 1:10)

less and without an heir which ridded the earth of his idolatrous worshipping blood-line forever.

“The time had come when the Lord was about to take Elijah up to Heaven in a whirlwind.” (II Kings 2:1)

Elijah as he assumed his last journey tested Elisha three times by encouraging him to stay behind. Elisha would not leave his mentor. Upon reaching the Jordan, Elijah parted the waters with a blow of his mantle. When the appointed time had come, Elisha asked “for a double portion of Elijah’s spirit.” (II Kings 2:9) A chariot of fire and horses of fire suddenly appeared as a whirl wind and took Elijah to Paradise, as Elijah’s mantle was predestined to be carried by the after math of the whirl wind to the ground. Elisha would take up the well worn mantle of the blessed living saint just as he would resume Elijah’s work of restoring the Israelite nation to the worship of One God.

“Then it happened as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into Heaven.” (II Kings 2:11)

While the prophet Elijah did not die in the days of Elisha, he would also remain alive not only in Paradise but through the prophecies of Malachi, as God would send Elijah to restore his chosen people before “the great and terrible day of the Lord comes.” (Malachi 4:5)

Jesus Ben Sirach in the Protestant omitted canonical Holy Book states that Elijah will “restore the tribes of Jacob.” (Sirach 48:10)

In the Gospel of St. Luke we are taught that both the Lord Jesus Christ and St. John the Baptist likeness was associated with that of their earthly predecessor Elijah. Many

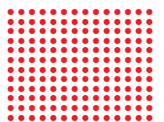
wrongly thought the Lord Jesus Christ was Elijah restored to life on earth. A week after St. Peter’s acknowledgement that the Lord Jesus Christ was the Son of God, the Lord took St. Peter, St. James and St. John to the top of a mountain where the Lord Jesus was transfigured before the disciples.

In the transfiguration Moses and Elijah were beside the Lord speaking about His approaching death many believe unifying the Law and the prophets of olden days. It also demonstrated the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ was indeed recognized in Paradise as God’s Son, His mission, and His ominous fate.

Others thought that St. John came “in the spirit and power of Elijah.” St. John the Baptist was further likened to Elijah with his camel hair clothing and leather belt. Tertullian (c.210) writes,

“But Elijah is to come again, not after quitting life, but after his assumption. It is not for the purpose of being restored to the body from which he had not departed, but for the purpose of revisiting the world from which he was taken up. It will not be by way of resuming a life that he had laid aside, but by way fulfilling prophecy. He will really and truly be the same man, both in respect to his name, his designation, and his unchanged humanity. Therefore, in what sense could John be Elijah? You have your answer in the angel’s announcement, who said, “And he will go before the people in the spirit and power of Elijah” not in his body and soul.”

The Coptic Church in the Rite of the Ordination of the Patriarch continues the memory of Elijah the great prophet as it proclaims regarding the new divinely chosen pope.... “Who was brought up by saintly fathers and gained their grace like Elisha with Elijah the Tishbite regarding the angelical Schema, as written by the apostle:





ΠΡΟΚΥΨΗ ΛΟΓΟΙΣ ΤΗΣ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΙΑΣ

Ἄγγελος

> 'And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined...these He also called, whom He called, these He also justified, and whom He justified, these He also glorified.'
(Romans 8: 28-30)

Conclusion

Elijah's works and prophecies were not always damnation centered. He could work one on one with kindness and compassion as he did when providing food for a destitute widow and her son. He could reside within the widow's household in a private room without complaint or dissatisfaction and bring her dead son, her only known Biblically addressed living relative, to life. Elijah respected God's creation as he desired to live among the elements of nature that his frequent and sudden necessitated disappearances led him into. He could have endearing relationships with his disciples, those whom loved the Lord and desired to worship the Lord as he did. Elijah through his strength of purpose and commitment to God would ultimately gain the respect of those he lived among, his predecessors the prophets and followers of the One True God that came after him, and through the ages of ages his name will live on as one whom God did not let taste death so great was this prophet. Even through his ascension to the Paradise Elijah would remain powerful...

> "I will give power to my two witnesses and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."...If anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies...These have power to shut Heaven so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy. (Revelation 11: 3-6)



Victorinus, a Syrian bishop and martyr would further elaborate (c.280) "And I saw another angel ascending from the east have the seal of the living God." He speaks of Elijah the prophet, who is the precursor of the times of the Antichrist—for the restoration and establishment of the churches from the great and intolerable persecution...The aid of the great eagles' wings is the gift of the two prophets, which is given to that Catholic Church. In the end times, a hundred and forty-four thousand men will believe on the preaching of Elijah...The two great wings are the two prophets, Elijah and the prophet who will be with him."

In like manner, it can be concluded that one who would appear as suddenly as the wind could indeed be taken up in a whirlwind. With certainty Elijah the Tishbite was not taken up to forever disappear but to appear suddenly once more before the final judgment of us all.

May Elijah the Prophet living in the Paradise, pray to the Lord on our behalf!

